

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

THE PROPER GENERIC NAMES OF THE VISCACHA,
CHINCHILLAS, AND THEIR ALLIES.

BY J. A. ALLEN.

In a recent paper entitled, 'The Name of the Viscacha',* Mr. Oldfield Thomas leaves in doubt the proper allocation of the genus *Callomys* D'Orbigny and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. As the application of the generic names given to the different species of the Chinchillidæ is involved in some obscurity, a brief history of the case may serve to throw a little light on some of the intricate points.

The first distinctive generic name applied to any member of the group appears to be *Viscaccia* Schinz, given in 1825 to the Viscacha of the pampas of the La Plata. The next in order is the name *Lagostomus*, given by Brooks in 1828 to the same animal, which name thus becomes a synonym of *Viscaccia* Schinz. In 1829 Bennett used the name *Chinchilla* in a generic sense for the Chinchillas of the Chilian Andes. In 1830 Lichtenstein gave the name *Oriomys* also to the same animals. The other of the three generic groups of this family was named *Lagidium* by Meyen in March, 1833, and *Lagotis* by Bennett a few months later in the same year. Regarding the application of these names there is, apparently, no question. The

*Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash. XIV, p. 25, April 2, 1901.

case, however, is different with *Callomys* D'Orbigny and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire mentioned above.

The authors of this genus included in it three species only, namely, *Callomys viscaccia*, *Callomys laniger*, and *Callomys aureus*. The first had already been assigned to the genus *Viscaccia* by Schinz, and upon the second the name *Chinchilla* had been bestowed by Brooks. This leaves the *Callomys aureus* only for consideration. *Callomys aureus* is based on furrier's skins, lacking the feet, the ears and the tail, and, of course, the skull; consequently the species may be treated as indeterminable and consequently *Callomys* is indeterminable. Waterhouse and others have considered *Callomys aureus* as referable to the genus *Lagidium*, but it would seem an unwarranted proceeding to displace *Lagidium* with the name *Callomys* on the basis of a species so imperfectly described as *C. aureus*. It hence seems proper to recognize for the three genera of the *Chinchillidae* the names *Viscaccia*, *Chinchilla*, and *Lagidium*.